

## Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

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APPROVED BY D:S.A.OXMAN

ARA:FJMCNEIL (DRAFT)

ARA/ECA:RWZIMMERMANN

HA:MSCHNEIDER (INFO)

H:CCCUTTER (INFO)

L/HR:CRUNYON (INFO)

EB:AWATSON (INFO)

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TO AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 096849

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP, SHUM, UY

SUBJECT: URUGUAYAN AIR FORCE CHIEF MEETING WITH DEPUTY  
SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER AND ARA DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
MCNEIL

REF: MONTEVIDEO 1171

1. URUGUAYAN AIR FORCE CINC, GENERAL RAUL BENDAHAAN,  
ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR PEREZ CALDAS, MET ON APRIL 10  
WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER FOR FORTY-FIVE MINUTES.  
ARA DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MCNEIL AND URUGUAYAN DESK  
OFFICER GRAHAM SAT IN, AND AFTERWARDS MET FOR AN ADDITIONAL  
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HOOR WITH GENERAL BENDAHAAN.

2. GENERAL BENDAHAAN, AFTER EXPLAINING THE PURPOSE OF HIS  
U.S. VISIT, THANKED MR. CHRISTOPHER FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO  
EXCHANGE IDEAS, ADDING THAT IN URUGUAY IT IS THE MILITARY  
WHICH MUST ESTABLISH POLICIES. MR. CHRISTOPHER RESPONDED  
THAT BENDAHAAN'S ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING THE ABA VISIT AND

MAINTAINING HELPFUL CONTACTS WITH OUR EMBASSY IN MONTEVIDEO WERE APPRECIATED. THE GOU RECEPTION OF THE ABA MISSION WAS A GOOD PORTENT FOR THE FUTURE, CHRISTOPHER ADDED.

3. MR. CHRISTOPHER ASKED THE GENERAL ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS. BENDAHAH REPLIED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCES OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS IN SOCIAL ISSUES. THE COUNTRY HAD PROGRESSED FROM A MARXIST SITUATION IN THE SCHOOLS WITHOUT WHOLESALE REPLACEMENT OF TEACHERS, AND IS AWAITING THE DAY WHEN A NEW GENERATION CAN RESTORE TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS. REGARDING POLITICAL ISSUES, HE REMARKED THAT NO GOVERNMENT COULD LONG EXIST IN THE FACE OF SERIOUS OPPOSITION FROM THE PUBLIC, AND SUCH OPPOSITION DOES NOT EXIST IN URUGUAY.

4. MR. CHRISTOPHER ALSO ASKED BENDAHAH FOR HIS PREDICTION OF THE FUTURE COURSE OF POLITICAL EVENTS. THE GENERAL OUTLINED THE PLAN FOR AN ELECTION IN 1981, UNDER A NEW CONSTITUTION, WITH THE CANDIDATES TO BE APPROVED BY THE ARMED FORCES. THIS PROGRAM IS INTENDED TO PREPARE THE COUNTRY FOR A RETURN TO THE TRADITIONAL FULLY DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PROCESS IN 1982. BENDAHAH ALSO OFFERED THE PROSPECT IN THE NEAR TERM OF RELEASE OR EXILE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

5. BENDAHAH NEXT GAVE THE STANDARD VERSION OF URUGUAYAN RECENT HISTORY, BUT WAS CANDID IN ACKNOWLEDGING PROBLEMS. CONFIDENTIAL

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HE NOTED THAT RECENT HISTORY DID NOT FIT THE URUGUAYAN DEMOCRATIC PATTERN AND ACKNOWLEDGED "BACKSLIDING" IN EFFORTS TO KEEP TO A TIMETABLE FOR POLITICAL REFORM. HE REFERRED TO POLITICAL FORCES OF THE LEFT AND DISCREDITED POLITICIANS WHO DO NOT WANT TO SEE THE GOU SUCCEED IN ITS EFFORTS TO MOVE INTO A NEW POLITICAL STAGE AFTER THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS. HE ADDED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD "GOOD INTENTIONS" BUT RECOGNIZED THAT THIS MIGHT NOT BE SUFFICIENT - "WE ARE WHAT WE ARE," HE SAID, BUT WITH LUCK THEY WOULD ACHIEVE THE DESIRED GOAL BY 1982.

6. THE GENERAL EXPLAINED THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL CRISIS HIS COUNTRY HAS GONE THROUGH. HE SAID URUGUAY MUST WORK HARD TO STRENGTHEN ITS ECONOMY AND THAT THE ABILITY OF THE GOU TO REMOVE CONSTRAINTS WILL IN PART DEPEND UPON ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, WHICH WILL IN TURN DEPEND IN PART ON U.S. SUPPORT. GENERAL BENDAHAH PREDICTED A RETURN TO TRADITIONAL DEMOCRACY IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM MR. CHRISTOPHER. THE GENERAL CLAIMED THAT THE URUGUAYAN PUBLIC UNDERSTANDS WHAT THE GOU IS DOING. HE ADDED THAT THERE WAS NO PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO THE PROGRAM. "WHILE THEY MAY NOT BE CHEERING, THERE IS ENOUGH UNDER-

STANDING OF WHAT IS BEING DONE," HE ADDED.

7. MR. CHRISTOPHER RESPONDED THAT, WHILE THE U.S. DOES NOT WANT TO WRITE THE GOU TIMETABLE FOR REFORM OR PRE-

SCRIBE FORMULAS, OUR RELATIONS WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE ABILITY OF THE GOU TO FOLLOW THE COURSE THAT THE GENERAL CHARTED. IF DEVELOPMENTS TAKE PLACE AS SKETCHED, WE WOULD BE ENCOURAGED. CHRISTOPHER ADDED THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO RESPOND IN A FAVORABLE WAY TO AUTHENTIC POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS. WE WOULD NOT BE COOL AND ALOOF, BUT RATHER WOULD RESPOND IN A WARM MANNER TO SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS. HE ADDED THAT WE WISH THE GOU GOOD LUCK IN ITS EFFORTS TO LIBERALIZE THE POLITICAL PROCESS. HE THOUGHT  
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THE ABA STATEMENT SHOULD BE HELPFUL. ALTHOUGH NOT A BLUE-PRINT OR FORMULA, IT IS CLEARLY AN INDICATION OF THE DIRECTION IN WHICH PROGRESS WOULD BE WELCOMED.

8. IN FOLLOW-UP MEETING, AFTER REITERATING OUR PLEASURE AT THE RECEPTION GIVEN BY THE GOU TO THE ABA VISIT, MCNEIL NOTED THE ABA AIDE MEMOIRE HAD DEALT WITH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, POLITICAL PRISONERS, INCLUDING ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE, WHICH CONTINUED TO GIVE US GREAT CONCERN. BENDAHAAN CLAIMED TORTURE WAS NO LONGER A SERIOUS ISSUE, AND THAT WITH RESPECT TO POLITICAL PRISONERS, DISTINCTIONS HAD TO BE MADE BETWEEN THE MAJORITY - WHO WERE NOT POLITICAL BUT WHO HAD COMMITTED SERIOUS CRIMES INCLUDING MURDER - AND A MINORITY ACCUSED OF LESSER OFFENSES. MCNEIL REMARKED THAT BENDAHAAN HAD EMPHASIZED LEFTIST OPPOSITION TO THE MILITARY'S PLANS FOR A CONTROLLED RETURN TO URUGUAY'S TRADITIONAL FULLY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, AND SUGGESTED THERE WERE ALSO RIGHTIST ELEMENTS OPPOSED TO A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY. BENDAHAAN SAID THAT WAS QUITE TRUE, AND, MOREOVER, THE FAR-RIGHT AND FAR-LEFT WERE REALLY NOT VERY DIFFERENT.

9. AMBASSADOR PEREZ CALDAS BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF THE U.S. POSITION IN THE IFIS REGARDING LOANS FOR URUGUAY. HE "EXPLAINED" TO GENERAL BENDAHAAN THAT IT WAS CONGRESS WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR U.S. POLICY AND NOT THE ADMINISTRATION. MR. MCNEIL RESPONDED THAT THIS WAS NOT ACCURATE. IT WAS TRUE THAT CONGRESS HAD ESTABLISHED LEGISLATION, SUCH AS THE HARKIN AMENDMENT, TO REFLECT HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS. HOWEVER, IT HAS BEEN THE ADMINISTRATION WHICH HAS INTERPRETED HOW THE SANCTIONS SHOULD APPLY, AND THE U.S. POLICY IN THE IFIS IS ADMINISTRATION POLICY.

10. COMMENT: GENERAL BENDAHAAN, THOUGH HE WANDERED  
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QUITE A BIT, PRESENTED A MORE HOPEFUL PICTURE OF URUGUAY THAN PREVIOUS VISITORS, SUCH AS FOREIGN MINISTER ROVIRA AND THE NOW RETIRED ARMY CINC VADORA. HE TALKED ABOUT URUGUAY'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, DWELT

MUCH LESS ON DEFENDING THE PAST, AND OFFERED THE PROSPECT OF A RETURN TO THE RULE OF LAW AND DEMOCRACY. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT ONE OF HIS PRINCIPAL MISSIONS WAS TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE U.S. ROLE IN HELPING URUGUAY. CHRISTOPHER

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